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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/16): PALESTINIANS SEE DOUBLE  
STANDARD IN US DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL,  
PALESTINIANS

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Main Stories:  
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Voice of Palestine (VOP) official radio aired an interview with Consul General Walles on their main evening news broadcast on April 14. The interview led the broadcast and highlighted U.S. commitment to the two-state solution. The interview was rebroadcast on April 15 as part of VOP's popular morning show and excerpts ran on the midday news show.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Ayyam lead with news of the April 15 meeting in Ramallah between Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad. Al-Quds also runs front page coverage. According to reports, Fayyad stressed the importance of exerting pressure on Israel to halt settlement activities in all of the "Occupied Territories, including Jerusalem" in order to provide, "vital support" to the peace process. Fayyad reiterated that Israel must abide by international standards and the Road Map and stressed that regional peace can be achieved if the Israeli occupation ends. Fayyad called on European countries and the Middle East Quartet to play a central role in these efforts. For his part, Moratinos stressed that Europe will not accept Israeli refusal of signed agreements, Israel must should meet its obligations to regional peace efforts and must halt settlement activities in support of a two-state solution. The same coverage quotes Special Envoy Mitchell from Tunisia noting that peace in the Middle East is a priority for President Obama. Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run separate front page coverage of Mitchell stressing that peace between Palestinians and Israel must be based on the two-state solution, with two states living together in peace and security.

Al-Quds runs inside coverage citing DPA of PLO chief negotiator

Sa'eb Erekat's comments from a press conference on April 15 in Jericho. Erekat spoke after meeting with Congresswoman Lowey's delegation and U.S. Consul General Walles in Jerusalem about obliging Israel to accept the two-state solution as the basis for negotiations. Erekat also noted that Israel must commit to signed agreements, halt all settlement activities and lift "the siege" and closures on the West Bank and Gaza. The U.S. delegation expressed U.S. support for the two-state solution and commitment to signed agreements between Palestinians and Israel.

Al-Quds leads with and the two dailies front page news about Palestinian groups declaring April 17, a "national solidarity day" in support of the 11,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. In related news, front pages report on calls by Islamic "activist institutions" urging Muslims to go to the Jerusalem Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on April 16. The action is aimed at preventing "extremist Jewish groups" from making good on their promise to "break into" the compound, according to coverage.

An Al-Ayyam inside page cites wire reports about Secretary Clinton calling for coordinated, international efforts to combat piracy and notes that Clinton will send an envoy to a donors conference for Somalia to discuss the issue. In local economic news, Al-Quds' inside page reports on a U.S. Consulate General delegation visiting the West Bank Qalqiliyah Chamber of Commerce on April 14. Discussions with local leaders focused on the city's "deteriorating economic situation" caused by Israeli closures and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, according to coverage. Local leaders called for U.S. Consulate General support in addressing the issues, reporting adds.

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In cultural news, Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam run inside page reports on a cooperative project between the U.S. Consulate General and a West Bank theater in Beit Jala to translate and perform Mark Twain's play "The Prince and the Pauper" for young audiences throughout the West Bank. The reports highlight a congratulatory message from Consulate Public Affairs Officer Schweitzer-Bluhm.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title, "What happened to the two-state solution?" (04/16): "If the U.S. joins Israel in its boycott of Hamas and allows Israel to control the Gaza Strip in an effort oust Hamas because it does not recognize Israel, why doesn't the U.S. apply the same logic when dealing with Israel who refuses the two-state solution, Annapolis and an independent Palestinian state? This [U.S.] policy highlights the double standard used by international powers and particularly the U.S. in dealing with [the two parties of] the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

2) Talal Okal opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title, "The ball is in the American court" (04/16): "This is the third visit by Envoy Mitchell to the region since being named by Presidents Obama... although these visits have not yet resulted in anything tangible, they reflect the seriousness of President Obama in pursuing the political process right from the beginning [of his tenure] ... The visit this time will be for the purpose of meeting with the newly-formed Israeli government which has already rejected everything related to the peace process... This rejection will require the U.S. administration to spend tremendous amounts of time and effort on repaving the peace process road [if still possible.]"

WALLES